



## **Stop the attacks on Lumads and their rights!**

### **IBON International statement on the Lumad refugee camp arson**

March 2016

IBON International strongly condemns the arson attack perpetrated by a paramilitary group on a Lumad refugee camp at the Haran Mission House of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP-Haran) in Davao City. The camp has been a sanctuary for Lumad communities who fled from Davao del Norte and Bukidnon due to militia atrocities.

It was around 2:00am on February 24 when Lumad refugees awoke from the smell of gasoline poured over the canvas roofs of their tents. Immediately after, a group of unidentified men believed to be members of the paramilitary group Alamara lighted a torch and threw it above their tents, setting the canvas roofs in flames. The incident left five (5) injured, including three (3) children, suffering 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns. The fire also ravaged two (2) dormitories that housed 20 medical interns and college students.

Investigation led by the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) confirmed that the incident was arson as evidenced by a wire fence that was ripped open at the back of the dormitory and empty bottles of gasoline seen in the compound. The smell of gasoline was also prominent six (6) hours after the fire was subdued, a strong indication that the incident was intentional and premeditated.

Since last year, the alarming incidents of direct attacks, killings, illegal arrests and detention, harassment and vilification in Lumad lands where there is strong resistance against environmental plunder have intensified. Based on the data of human rights group KARAPATAN, 68 indigenous peoples have been killed during the Aquino administration, 58 of them were Lumads.

In May 2015, 700 Lumads were displaced from their village in Talaingod, Davao del Norte after alleged government military and paramilitary forces occupied their area. Thousands of students are now deprived of education after their schools were forced shut and teachers threatened to be killed. Military attacks and other harassment have been reported in hundreds of indigenous alternative schools in the region, including the Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation, Inc. (MISFI) campuses that IBON International's Adopt-a-School program supports.

On September 1, 2015, ALCADDEV executive director Emok Samarca and Lumad leader Dionel Campos and his cousin Bello Sinzo were executed during an attack by the Magahat/Bagani paramilitary group in Lianga, Surigao del Sur. The killings were witnessed by residents, students and teachers who were forced out of their rooms and dormitories by the armed men. On the following day, the same paramilitary group set fire to at least ten (10) houses and a Lumad school near the area where the Lumad leaders were slain. Evacuees from CARAGA have reached 3,000 and counting.

The indigenous communities continue to suffer from the abuses and harassment of militias serving local and foreign capitalists who seek to evict Lumads from their land in order to expand massive

mining and logging operations. Aside from displacement and killings, the long list of human rights abuses now includes arson in the refugee camp that served as temporary sanctuaries for Lumad communities.

We at IBON International are appalled by the continuing harassment of the Lumad evacuees seeking refuge at the UCCP Haran and we call for the immediate arrest of the perpetrators of this attack. We strongly call for the dismantling of all paramilitary groups in the country and the pull out of military troops from Lumad communities and schools.

As an institution advocating for people's rights and democracy, IBON International is deeply concerned by the plight of Lumad communities and other indigenous groups that suffer from poverty, discrimination, neglect, and human rights violations. We demand that the Philippine government adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all human rights instruments it is party and signatory to. Governments have the duty to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights under international law. Thus, the government of President Benigno Aquino III is ultimately accountable for the violation of the Lumad people's rights.

Finally, we call on all Filipinos and the international community to stand in solidarity with our Lumad brothers and sisters to take back the land that is rightfully theirs, exercise their right to self-determined development and live peacefully in their communities free from state violence.

**DEFEND THE LUMAD PEOPLE'S RIGHTS!**

**END MILITARIZATION NOW!**

**STOP LUMAD KILLINGS!**